ments to ensure peace and to take all necessary steps to combat communal forces in the country. However, the Central Government remain in constant touch from time to time with the State Governments anj provide necessary guidance and advice in devising ways and means to combat communal forces. State Governments have also been advised to streamline the administrative anj intelligence machinery and to take prompt action like arrest of anti-social elements, search and seizure for unauthorised arms and action against elements inciting communalism etc. Apart from this timely alert is sounded and guidance and advice provided as and when required. Administrative arrangements have also been tightened to combat activities of communal forces.

(b) No such proposal is under the consideration of the Government. However, the electoral law, as it stands, contains suitable provisions for curbing any tendency to promote enmity or hatred on grounds of religion, caste, race, community or language in elections. The statute also regards such an act as an electoral offence and the person concerned shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years or with fine or with both. Further, the Model Code of Conduct for the guidance of the political rties and candidates evolved by the Election Commission prohibits and appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes.

Deterioration in the environment caused by mining in Raniganj Coalfield Area inWest Bengal

2541. SHRI SUNIL BASU RAY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of 'the serious deterioration in the environ ment caused by mining in the Raniganj coalfield area in West Bengal; and

(b) if so, what remedial steps the Cent ral Government have taken or propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The remedial steps taken are:

Detailed environmental impact assessment of all development projects is. taken up to ensure that air, water and land pollution is minimised and is kept within the prescribed limits.

Necessary environmental safeguards are incorporated in new mining projects; and

Methodologies are evolved for reclamation of abandoned mines on the basis of pilot projects.

Privatisation of Forests

2542. SHRI J.P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved the proposal of some State Governments to privatise forests;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard;

(c) whether the Central Government are aware that some State Governments have privatised forests;

(d) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(e) what benefit is likely to accrue to the State Governments from the privatisation of forests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Government of India have not approved any proposal to privatise forests.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Some cases of leasing of forest lands to private companies have been reported. Details are being cellected and will be laid on the Table of the House.